

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20229



U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

APR 4 2006

The Honorable Jon Christopher Porter
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce and Agency Organization
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your interest in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and our efforts to appropriately staff our nation's borders and ports of entry. In response to your request, I am pleased to provide information on our current staffing levels, as well as our hiring process. Our staffing levels and rigorous hiring process ensure that CBP completes our primary mission of securing the American public against terrorists and the instruments of terror.

As America's frontline, CBP serves as the guardians of our border. Nationwide, more than 18,000 CBP Officers process incoming people and cargo at more than 300 ports of entry. On the average day, these men and women process 1.1 million passengers, half of which are typically aliens, and deny admission to 868 non-citizens. The cargo numbers are also staggering, with an average of approximately 70,000 truck, rail, and sea containers screened daily. Each day, CBP collects just over \$81 million in fees, duties, and tariffs, and seizes roughly 5,500 pounds of narcotics.

The unification of the inspection functions from three legacy agencies in three different Cabinet Departments into a single CBP Officer position has significantly increased our efficiency at airports and other ports of entry. Nonetheless, CBP has maintained the specialized skills of the three legacy areas. For example, CBP has created the new position of Agriculture Specialist to aid our CBP Officers in protecting American agriculture interests from introduced threats such as harmful pests and diseases.

Between our established ports of entry, more than 11,000 Border Patrol Agents apprehend an average of 3,000 people each day trying to enter our country illegally. In addition to patrolling 6,900 miles of land border, the Border Patrol operates 33 interior checkpoints, providing a layered defense against illegal entry.

To accomplish these results, CBP has an extraordinary workforce. A quality recruiting process is used to ensure that a large pool of candidates can be reduced to a group of outstanding, qualified candidates. After rigorous testing and interviewing, tentatively selected candidates undergo an intensive background investigation. Integrity assurance is a requirement for all CBP employees. After the extensive initial investigation, all CBP employees are subject to periodic reviews and investigations of any complaints filed against them. Working with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the CBP Office of Management Inspections and Integrity Assurance ensures that all CBP employees are held to the highest standards. These standards allow us to serve the American public with vigilance, integrity, and professionalism.

Training is also a critical factor in insuring the quality of CBP's workforce. Border Patrol Agents attend 20 weeks of training at the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico, while CBP Officers attend 16 weeks of training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, GA. Both CBP Officers and Border Patrol Agents continue with on-the-job training and advanced training at regional and headquarters locations. All training programs are coordinated and continually reevaluated by CBP's Office of Training and Development.

CBP continuously monitors staffing levels. Everyday, more than 230,000 passengers are processed by CBP Officers at our Nation's international airports. Our current staffing levels enable us to maintain an average wait time of 32 minutes for primary inspection. CBP continually looks for ways to expedite the processing of law-abiding travelers, while targeting potential smugglers, terrorists, and illegal immigrants.


To this end, we are developing two model airports at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, TX, and Dulles International Airport, in Dulles, VA. These model airports will enable CBP to continue refining the mix of human and technological resources; thereby maximizing our effectiveness. In a similar exercise on our borders, the Secure Border Initiative is pursuing the appropriate mix of personnel, technology, infrastructure, as well as manned and unmanned air support to best gain operational control of our land borders.

Across our operations, CBP recognizes that the flow of legitimate visitors and goods to the United States is vital to our economy. We steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States, while fostering economic security through lawful international trade and travel. Our men and women are among the most highly trained and respected in law enforcement, and are the most important tool we have to pursue our critical mission.

CBP is grateful for the support provided by the Congress for recent budget requests, and we look forward to working with Congress in the future to secure the American homeland at and beyond our borders.

If we may offer further assistance, please contact me at (202) 344-1760.

Sincerely,



for Thaddeus M. Bingel
Assistant Commissioner
Office of Congressional Affairs.